



**For immediate release
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STATE SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT ON DRAFT PLAN TO PROTECT MASSACHUSETTS FORESTS

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) are seeking public comment on the recently released “*Draft Massachusetts Highly Destructive Invasive Species Response Plan*” meant to guide the state’s response to a number of invasive species that may pose a significant threat to Massachusetts’ urban and rural forests.

Over the years, a number of insects and diseases from other countries that have established themselves in the United States are causing tree and forest mortality that is difficult to suppress due to the lack of normal biological controls.

“The Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Department of Agricultural Resources, in cooperation with the US Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and the USDA Forest Service, have prepared a response plan that anticipates and addresses forest invasive species that pose a significant threat to Massachusetts’ urban and rural forests,” said DCR Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan, Jr. “We look forward to hearing from the public on this complex and difficult forest health issue.”

Commissioner Sullivan also noted that the movement across state lines of firewood and nursery stock that has not been appropriately inspected poses the greatest challenge in controlling highly destructive invasive species. The draft response plan calls for the monitoring and early detection of emerald ash borer, Asian long-horned beetle, sudden oak death, Sirex woodwasp, and hemlock woolly adelgid. If the emerald ash borer, Asian long-horned beetle, and sudden oak death are detected, state and federal agencies will deploy an Incident Command System to locate and treat trees in an attempt to manage and control their spread. Other measures are being developed and will be implemented against the Sirex woodwasp and hemlock woolly adelgid.

“We are committed to protecting the Commonwealth’s trees from invasive species. Many of the species targeted in the Draft Response Plan can cause significant damage to the nursery trade, as well as to natural forests,” DAR Commissioner Douglas Petersen said. “Last year, the DAR banned the importation and sale of more than 140 invasive and noxious plants. The Plan

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS · EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

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released today is another positive step designed to safeguard the Bay State's forests and tree nurseries."

The public is invited to participate in reviewing and commenting on the Draft Response Plan, which is on the DCR Forestry web page at www.mass.gov/dcr/forestry. A hard copy also can be requested by calling Patricia Dickhaut at 617-626-1459.

A public information meeting on the Draft Response Plan, at which the public will have the opportunity to provide comments, is scheduled for December 12, 2007, from 6:30- 9:30 p.m., at The Sturbridge Host and Conference Center, Route 20, Sturbridge.

The Public Comment Period will be 45 days; DCR will accept public comments postmarked by January 15, 2007. Please mail all comments to DCR, Bureau of Forestry Emergency Response Plan, 251 Causeway Street, Suite 600, Boston, MA 02114, Attn: Patricia Dickhaut. Alternatively, e-mail comments to patricia.dickhaut@state.ma.us.

After reviewing all comments, DCR and DAR officials will post a final "***Massachusetts Highly Destructive Invasive Species Response Plan***" on the DCR Forestry web page.

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The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), an agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, oversees 450,000 acres of parks and forests, beaches, trails, roadways, and bridges. Led by Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr., the agency's mission is to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. To learn more about DCR, our facilities, and our programs, please visit www.mass.gov/dcr. Contact us at mass.parks@state.ma.us.